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Title: a dusty little book

Author: Clark Ashton Smith

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The Abomination of
Desolation -+-

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The desert of Soom is
said to lie at the world's
unchartable extreme,
between the lands that
are little known and
those that are scarcely
even conjectured. It is
dreaded by travellers, for
its bare and ever-moving
sands are without oases,
and a strange horror is
rumored to dwell among
them. Of this horror,
many tales are told, and
nearly all of the tales
are different. Some say
that the thing has
neither visible form nor
audible voice, and others
that it is a dire chimera
with multitudinous heads
and horns and tails, and
a tongue whose sound is
like the tolling of bells in
deep funereal vaults.

Of
the caravans and solitary
wanderers who have
ventured amid the sands
of Soom, none has
returned without a story
to tell; and some have
never returned at all, or
have come back with
brains devoured to
madness by the terror
and vertigo and delirium

of infinite empty space.

..Yes, there are many
tales, of a thing that
follows furtively or with
the pandemonium of a
thousand devils, of a
thing that roars or
whispers balefully from
the sand or from the
wind, or stirs unseen in
the coiling silence; or
falls from the heavens
like a crushing incubus: or
yawns like a sudden pit
before the feet of the
traveller...

But once on a time there
were two lovers who
came to the desert of
Soom, and who had
occasion to cross the
sterile sands. They knew
not the evil rumor of
the place; and, since they
had found an abiding Eden
in each other's eyes, it
is doubtful if they even
knew that they were
passing through a desert.

And they alone, of all
who have dared this
fearsome desolation, have
had no tale to relate of
any troublous thing, of
any horror that followed
or lurked before them,
either seen or unseen,
audible or heard; and for
them there was no
chimera, no yawning pit
nor incubus. And never,
never could they
comprehend the stories
that were told by less
fortunate wayfarers.